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The relation of self-efficacy and interests: A meta-analysis of 60 samples[☆]

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Abstract

This study empirically synthesizes and evaluates studies that have examined the relation between vocationally relevant domains of self-efficacy and interests. We conducted a meta-analytic review of 60 empirical independent samples ($N = 39,154$) in which relations between self-efficacy and interests had been examined. Fifty-three of these samples ($N = 37,829$) included parallel measures of the constructs. Relations between parallel measures of Holland's RIASEC themes, the specific dimensions of art, math, science and math/science combined, and traditionally female and male occupations are also presented. Results demonstrated that self-efficacy and interests are independent constructs that correlate moderately. Differences by sex, measure, and age group are noted. Future directions for research regarding links between self-efficacy and interests are discussed.

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1. Introduction

This article examines the current status of relations between vocationally relevant domains of self-efficacy and interests, building on Lent, Brown, and Hackett's (1994) meta-analysis of 13 studies that yielded an average weighted effect size of .53. Since

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1994, numerous empirical and conceptual articles have examined the self-efficacy/interest linkage across more diverse aspects of vocational behavior. The present investigation integrates this literature by first describing methodological issues and then presenting a meta-analytic review of 53 parallel empirical samples that examined relations between self-efficacy and interests.

A critical question in social cognitive career theory involves the overlap of self-efficacy and interest within a similar content area (e.g., science self-efficacy with science interests): Does either construct help explain a particular criterion such as occupational membership above and beyond the other? In addition to its theoretical import, answering this question has implications for practice. On one hand, the joint assessment of science self-efficacy and interests is recommended if these constructs are sufficiently distinct and provide incremental explanation of variance in selecting a college major, for example. On the other hand, the joint assessment is *not* warranted if the constructs are redundant with one another and explain the same variance in selecting a major.

The question of independence has drawn a considerable amount of attention. Lapan and Jingeleski (1992) concluded that the constructs of self-efficacy, interests, and outcome expectations were not sufficiently distinct to be labeled different constructs. Tracey (1997) supported this conclusion, based upon his analysis that showed a similar structure for interests and self-efficacy. In contrast, others including Swanson (1993), Isaacs, Borgen, Donnay, and Hansen (1997), Donnay and Borgen (1999), Tracey and Hopkins (2001), and Rottinghaus, Lindley, Green, and Borgen (2002) have argued that although interests, skills confidence, and self-rated abilities are related, they are sufficiently distinct to be considered separate constructs.

It is notable that most of the early studies examining these relationships involved expressed interests in science or math and used diverse measures of self-efficacy. Although a few studies have investigated the relation between self-efficacy and interests in additional areas such as English, art, and social studies (cf. Smith & Fouad, 1999), very little is known about non-investigative career areas. Within the past decade, several instruments have been introduced to assess self-efficacy, or skills confidence, across the six Holland themes (Betz, Borgen, & Harmon, 1996; Campbell, Hyne, & Nilsen, 1992; Lucas, Wanberg, & Zytowski, 1997).

Research on domain-specific self-efficacy instruments in conjunction with their corresponding interest measures has allowed for a more thorough examination of the links between self-efficacy and interests. The burgeoning literature in this area now enables the investigation of relationships between these constructs at multiple levels including Holland themes or more specific content (i.e., Sales), across occupational domains. Examining multiple levels of specificity, consistent with Bandura's (1986) self-efficacy construct, will advance understanding of career outcomes.

2. Methodological issues

Before reporting the meta-analyses, a brief overview of several instruments used across the studies included in our meta-analysis is presented. Only prominent

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